

JARED HUFFMAN
2ND DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0502

November 17, 2014

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1630 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-5161
FAX: (202) 225-5163
WEBSITE: huffman.house.gov

Hon. Tom Wheeler, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

Received & Inspected

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FCC Mail Room

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

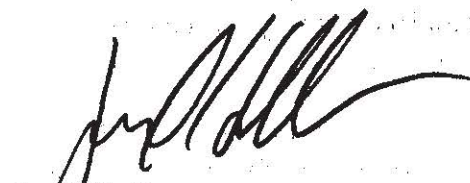
As each day passes without broadband in rural America, the digital divide widens between our urban and rural populations. In the 1930s, electric cooperatives brought electricity to rural America when the for-profit utilities would not. Today, that same scenario is being replayed as we deploy broadband service in rural America. Robust broadband service is no longer a luxury, but rather a necessity for full participation in our economy and society.

The Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II represents a tremendous opportunity to fulfill the promise of ubiquitous access to high speed internet for every American. I commend the FCC's efforts to ensure that CAF funds are maximized to their best use, and recognize the complexities of this effort. I encourage the Commission to create an inclusive process where all eligible providers, including electric cooperatives, have an opportunity to compete for support by offering effective solutions to close the digital divide between rural and urban areas.

In addition I urge the commission to work on raising the minimum broadband speed associated with CAF Phase II funding. Deploying broadband networks using outdated speeds will only serve to increase the digital divide.

Without a level playing field, open to competition, rural America may never have the chance to experience the educational opportunities, employment prospects, and advanced healthcare that broadband delivers to those lucky enough to live in low cost, high population centers. I look forward to working with the Commission to bring broadband service to my constituents in Rural America.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

SAN RAFAEL
999 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 290
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901
PHONE: (415) 258-9657
FAX: (415) 258-9913

PETALUMA
206 G STREET, #3
PETALUMA, CA 94952
PHONE: (707) 981-8967
FAX: (415) 258-9913

UKIAH
559 LOW GAP ROAD
UKIAH, CA 95482
PHONE & FAX: (707) 671-7449

FORT BRAGG
430 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET
P.O. BOX 2208
FORT BRAGG, CA 95437
PHONE: (707) 962-0933
FAX: (707) 962-0905

EUREKA
317 THIRD STREET, SUITE 1
EUREKA, CA 95501
PHONE: (707) 407-3585
FAX: (707) 407-3559



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 23, 2014

The Honorable Jared Huffman
U.S. House of Representatives
1630 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Huffman:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you urge the Commission to create an inclusive process where all eligible providers, including electric cooperatives, have an opportunity to compete for support. You also request that the Commission raise the minimum broadband speed benchmark for CAF II funding. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the United States of the 21st century. We are focused on updating the universal service high-cost program to ensure that we are delivering the best possible voice and broadband experiences to rural areas of states within the confines of our Connect America budget, while providing increased certainty and predictability for all carriers and a climate for increased broadband expansion.

Last week, the Commission adopted a *Connect America Fund Phase II Report and Order* to move forward with Connect America for price-cap carriers. Importantly, the Order raises the minimum broadband speed from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps, consistent with our statutory obligation to ensure that rural Americans have access to services that are reasonably comparable to those available to their urban and suburban neighbors. And in response to concerns raised by price cap carriers regarding the increased speed requirement, the Order extends the term of support for price cap carriers that accept the state-level commitment, and gives those carriers more flexibility in serving those areas. The Commission also determined that we should adjust the offer of support for a Phase II state-level commitment based on the results of our rural broadband experiments. This approach will ensure that those areas where there is already a competitive provider willing to offer state-of-the-art broadband service will enjoy the benefits of competition as soon as possible.

These actions represent a critical step in our continued effort to reform and modernize the universal service high-cost program – as well as other components of the Universal Service Fund – to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tom Wheeler